DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 143 SO 034 564

AUTHOR	Maina, Faith
TITLE	Female Representation in Gikuyu Popular Music: A Catalyst for Domestic Violence.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	11p.; Paper presented at Women's Worlds 2002: The International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women (8th, Kampala, Uganda, July 21-26, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavioral Science Research; Content Analysis; Developing Nations; *Family Violence; *Females; Foreign Countries; *Gender Issues; Media Research; *Popular Music; Songs
IDENTIFIERS	*Kenya

ABSTRACT

The females portrayed in the Gikuyu popular music of Kenya are almost always evil. Women are often viewed as prostitutes who see their sexuality as a commodity to be exchanged for material goods. After the unsuspecting males have delivered the goods, the women are more often than not betrayed. These portraits create a hostile and toxic environment for girls/women to thrive. While much has been done in the field of law enactment to curb domestic violence, little is said about providing a conductive social environment and identifying the root causes of domestic violence. Using content analysis methods, a study shows that Gikuyu popular music is a site for tension between males and females a catalyst for domestic violence. A few popular Gikuyu songs are selected for analysis. The Gikuyu language is predominantly spoken in Central province of Kenya and also parts of the Diaspora. Gikuyu speakers in Kenya are estimated at eight million. Includes nine references. (Author/BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 477 143

Female Representation in Gikuyu Popular Music: A Catalyst for Domestic Violence

A paper presentation to the

Women's Worlds 2002
The 8th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women

"Gendered Worlds: Gains and Challenges"

July 21-26, 2002, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

By

Faith Maina, Ph.D
Department of Curriculum and instruction
State University of New York
Oswego, NY.
13126
Tel. (315) 312-2641
Fax. (315) 312-5446
Email: maina@oswego.edu

Abstract

The females in Gikuyu popular music are evil; prostitutes who see their sexuality as a commodity to be exchanged for material goods, and even after the unsuspecting males have delivered the goods, they are more often than not betrayed. These portraits create a hostile and toxic environment for girls/women to thrive. While a lot has been done in the field of law enactment to curb domestic violence, little is said about providing a conducive social environment and to identify the root-causes of domestic violence. Using content analysis methods, this study shows that Gikuyu popular music is a site for tension between males and females__ a catalyst for domestic violence.

SO 034 564

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

F. Maina

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Female Representation in Gikuyu Popular Music:
A Catalyst for Domestic Violence

Faith Maina, Ph.D
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
State University of New York at Oswego.

Introduction

Domestic violence, specifically violence against women is a global calamity. According to former Surgeon General Koop, 3 to 4 million women in the United States are beaten by their partners each year. And as many as 15 million women have been abused at some time during their lives. Every minute and a half a woman is raped in South Africa, totaling approximately 386, 000 women raped each year. In Bangladesh, assassination of wives by husbands accounts for 50% of all murders. A survey done in Santiago, Chile indicates that 80% of women have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse by a male partner or relative; 63% report that they are currently abused. In a random sample of Norwegian gynecological patients, 25% of women who had ever lived with a male partner had been physically and or/sexually assaulted by him. In Canada, a government commission estimated that 1 in 4 female children and 1 in 10 male children will be sexually assaulted before the age of 17 years (Hiese, 1992)

Domestic or family violence is one of the leading causes of female injuries in almost every country and it accounts in some countries for the largest percentage of hospital visits by women. "Battering is the greatest cause of injury among U.S. women, accounting for more emergency room visits than auto accidents, muggings, and rape combined." (Heise, 1992, p.1). Domestic violence affects women and operates to diminish women's autonomy and sense of self-worth. It involves the infliction of bodily injury, accompanied by verbal threats and harassment, emotional abuse or the destruction of property as means of coercion, control, revenge or punishment, on a person with whom the abuser is involved in an intimate relationship (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

Contextual Framework

In the republic of Kenya, domestic violence is prevalent. In a detailed family planning survey of women in the Kisii district, 42% women interviewed said they were beaten regularly by their husbands (Heise, 1992). "Every day, Kenyan girls and women are harassed, raped, battered and murdered and the culture of silence surrounding violence against women masks its prevalence and allows it to continue" (Mwau, 1999 cited in Global Information Network). In a recent survey on domestic violence in Kenya, 70% of respondents both men and women were aware of wife beating in their neighborhood, yet 60% said women always or are sometimes responsible for the beating. 51% said that women who batter women should not be punished. The survey also indicates that battered women rarely seek help from the law enforcement agencies and when they did; the assailants only receive a small fine or are let to go free (Women's watch, 1996).

However, progress has been made to curb domestic violence and particularly in the area of law enactment. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women, adopted in December 1993, is a comprehensive statement of international standards with regard to the protection of women from violence. The declaration denounces violence against women, including violence in the home, as "a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women. It provides that:

> States should condemn violence against women. [and] exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetuated by state or by private persons. (Human rights watch, 1995, p.5).

The signatories of this declaration (Kenya is one) are required to condemn, prevent and punish perpetrators of violence against women and calls for governments to undertake progressively specific positive measures to address the root causes of gender-based violence, such as mass education programs to counter gender stereotypes, as well as to create protective and social services for victims of violence (Human rights watch, 1995).

Legal Changes in Kenya

The UN declaration and the consequent activism have brought significant changes to the legislation in Kenya. The Domestic violence (Family Protection) Bill proposed by the

Kenya Attorney General Amos Wako was recently passed by parliament. The bill defines domestic violence as physical, sexual and mental in nature, and even recognizes the issue of child witnessing violence in the home. The passing of this bill has helped break the culture of silence that has characterized domestic violence for decades. Women who have suffered silently for years have broken their silence and joined the campaign to eradicate gender violence in Kenya. This has also created a climate in which the courts are asked to redress victims of domestic violence. A recent case is that of Agnes Siyiankoi, a 30-year-old Masai woman, who revealed in a hearing that she has endured 13 years of beatings before finally taking her husband to court. Ms. Siyiankoi was beaten so badly that she had to be carried to the hospital, where she was required to make an official complaint (Center for reproductive law and policy, 1997).

Hostile Social Environment.

Although much effort has been put in enacting laws that protect women against violence, little is being said about the hostile social environment that breed's violence. This paper will address the social issues surrounding female representation in the popular culture, and specifically, Gikuyu popular music. The paper will argue that the images portrayed of females in Gikuyu music are almost always negative, showing that women are evil prostitutes who see their sexuality as a commodity to be exchanged for material goods, and even after the unsuspecting males have delivered the goods, they are more often than not betrayed (Wamaitu). On another level, the portrait of woman is immoral, irrational and incapable of reason (By law). They are childlike and simpletons incapable of serious thinking (Kiune).

Needless to say, lessons are learned and repeatedly over and over. Men/boys are taught to be women haters. They are taught to exert control and demand total submission to win the "war" against the "evil" women. They learn that there is no need to listen to women because they have no knowledge to share. They should live in a state of "fear" and the woman is their enemy. On the other hand girls/women learn to subvert the control and submission creating serious tension __ a catalyst for violence.

Influence of media on perception

Hendricks (2002) in reference to Television viewing argues that the "long term exposure to television has subtle and cumulative effects on shaping views of social reality" (p.112). Interpreted for Gikuyu popular music, it means that constant exposure to negative messages about women over and over has the potential of influencing perception. More often than not, individuals develop the "mean women syndrome" that makes them to overestimate the incidences of female infidelity for instance, and they believe they are likely to be victimized.

Hendricks (2002) identifies four primary capabilities that affect individual abilities to learn new behavior and which resonates with the way Gikuyu popular music alters behavior. These learning abilities are: symbolizing, self-regulate, self-reflection and learning unconsciously. Through the use of symbols, individuals assign meaning to their environments and interpret events. "Symbols communicate values and stand for abstract concepts" (Hendricks, 2002, p.115). The symbols common in Gikuyu music include what Scheurer (1990) describes as gold diggers; "the seductress [who] has the power to transform men into grunting, rooting animals, divesting them of their power and control" (P. 29). These are women whose primary desire is to befriend an unsuspecting male with their smoldering sexuality and them leave them unceremoniously when another male appears on the horizon (Mumunya. trans. Suckers).

Self-regulation is the ability to control one's behavior. While Gikuyu men are supposed to be in total control, they often lose their control through the manipulation of the female "goddess". A paradox to the nostalgic desire that men posses regarding the traditional role of the woman, "her existence is her man, her home and her family" (Scheurer, 1990, p.26). She is seen as the protectress of those values, depicted as essential for "our moral good as well as out happiness" (Sheurer, 1990, p.26).

Then there is the self-reflection as an ability to learn a different behavior. This is the ability to distinguish accurate and faulty thinking. Individuals compare their thoughts with those of others to determine their validity. This often leads to the "confirmation of stereotypes or misconceptions" (Hendricks, 2002, p. 117). So, when men repeatedly hear negative messages about women in Gikuyu popular music, "they integrate this

knowledge into their cognition and through cultivation and social cognition theory, they come to accept this norm as reality" (Hendricks, 2002, p.117).

This new reality put the female "at risk" of violence. Listening to the negative messages in the Gikuyu music creates and reinforces particular social values, stereotypes and behavior as well as alters the perceptions of reality. Exposure to this stereotypes models and reinforces the association males have for females such as physical attractiveness, desirability and self-worth. This may make young men at an impressionable age to internalize the stereotype and form distorted mental constructions of relationships and dissatisfaction. They live in a high alert for any symptom of the images they have internalized. Repeated exposure to a certain female image is detrimental to individuals predisposed to form relationships. They use this image to judge their own relationships, providing them with information that may inhibit their behavior. Negative comments about women present a strong emotional message to the listener, leading them to be dissatisfied with relationships at the first signs of a problem. "Combination of differential modeling and reinforcement is the most influential means to shape behavior ((Fouts & Burggraf, 1999, p.2). It is therefore safe to conclude that the internalization of external agents through the negative images in Gikuyu music and reinforcement of cultural values that symbolizes the woman as evil gives the listeners the message that relationships are to be avoided and when they do happen, men should be on high alert to safe guard themselves. The literal acceptance of this music leads to the victimization of women. It puts them in a vicarious position that more often than not leads to domestic violence. What is unfortunate is that violence in intimate relationships is almost always ignored (hook, 1989).

Method

The study for this paper uses content analysis research method. This is a suitable way of analyzing a person or group's conscious or unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas often revealed in their communication (Fraenkel, 2001). Gikuyu language is predominantly spoken in Central province of Kenya and also parts of the Diaspora. It is

estimated that there are 8 million Gikuyu speakers in Kenya, not counting tens of thousands of other speakers outside the country. Gikuyu language has had a large influence in the country in general because of the Central Province proximity to the city of Nairobi and for having been one of the languages that the early missionaries used to spread the gospel.

A few popular Gikuyu songs are selected for analysis. These are songs that have appeared in the local charts of a local newspaper in the past. This will include those songs that are played regularly in the radio stations, which are outlets of Gikuyu popular music. Each song selected will be reviewed by looking for incidents of female representations, recording the descriptions of women (age, looks,) socio-cultural context, story line and critical view (explicit/implicit messages, limitations of the perspectives, stereotypes about women, and possible sites of tension). Actual quotes form the songs will be recorded as well as code general categories that emerge.

Gikuyu Popular Music

In listening to Gikuyu popular music, distinct images of women emerge, reflecting changes in attitude towards women. As Scheurer (1990) reminds us, popular song has always held out marriage as the natural end of relationship: in fact, the study of images of women in pop music is by extension, the study of our attitude towards love. That is why it is of necessity that in popular music the ideal woman is the perfect wife. This kind of woman is described as a "sweetheart, friend and wife" (Scheurer, 1990, p.26). One of the themes that emerge from the Gikuyu popular song exemplifies this model. A beautiful woman who may not necessarily posses a lot of wit or intelligence. All is required of her is to tend to the domestic virtues. She is faithful, loving and capable of making the home environment a "warm haven and symbol of stability for her man" (p.26). One such song is by By Law and titled "Mumbi, trans. Creator" This woman is so beautiful that she radiates unnatural light. Her arrival in the village adds esteem on the potential husband. There is hassle and bustle as the prominent people in the village question who she really is. She is a goddess. The natural route she will take is that of marriage and the man will "be king". This woman is placed on a pedestal the man worships at her altar.

However, this image is the exception more than the rule. Most other songs portray the image of the "gold digger". A good example is the popular song by Gacheru titled "Mumunya trans. Sucker). This is an older brother dishing out advice about women to a younger brother. He advises the little brother that the modern woman is nothing but a sucker/pest. They will suck his blood until he drops dead. What they are interested is material wealth. For instance, when you take her out to dinner, she looks at the menu and asks for the most expensive item. Then she borrows money for all kinds of things. "Mwendana ukimenyage ni wa tuika bengi yake". (trans. once you establish a love relationship, you should be aware that you become her bank). You will pay her rent, she will borrow money for the hair salon etc. What is unfortunate about this relationship Gacheru continues to advice the younger brother is that while he is dishing out all this money, the woman has another ongoing relationship. Expecting to be rewarded by consummating the relationship, the man is told that he cannot come to the house because the "mother" is visiting. The "mother" turns out to be another man who has succumbed to similar manipulation. The woman in this song can be described accurately as a gold digger. She is greedy for material, a perpetual liar, conniving betrayer and promiscuous.

This image of a gold digger is repeated in many other songs. A good example is another song by … titled Kumbika Kiihu (trans. Buried a mongoose). In this case, a friendship has been flourishing. The man pays rent (inflated) and dishes out all kinds of material comforts. Unfortunately however, this woman is in love with another man who dishes the same material comfort. So, the song laments on the contrasts of what he thought he was in her life, such as being a chair warmer, a servant etc. The woman is definitely promiscuous, liar and a prostitute.

What is even devastating is the image of a cheating wife. The man lies to the woman that he is going on a business trip but is only interested in catching her with a lover. The woman manipulates the unknowing man so that even if in fact, there was a lover in the house, he is unable to catch him.

Violence against women is seen as a form of entertainment. A man sets out to discipline his wife in a song titled "Kiune". In this song, the woman has not performed a frivolous duty when the man comes home. He disciplines her by beating her in front her

own child and then supplies her with new rules for the house. One of the rule is that he will never eat food cooked by a house-help.

Lessons learned

We can observe from these imageries that the woman in Gikuyu popular music is not to be trusted. She is an opportunistic gold digger who is almost always promiscuous. What we see then is the desire of the male to take back control even if it means physically assaulting the woman. Going back to the cultivation theory, when individuals are exposed to these images constantly, they are likely to change perceptions. They will overestimate the incidences of promiscuity and believe they will be victims. Victims will react in the way they know best. Violence directed to women.

Significance of the study:

This study has significant implications regarding the way domestic violence is viewed in the society. While many institutions are bent on using the law to curb violence, little is known about creating social environments that enables women to thrive without constant fear of violence. Sensitizing the general public about the sites that continue to celebrate abuse is a step toward eradicating violence.

References:

Center for the reproductive law and policy (1997*): Around the world: Kenyan woman takes abusing husband to court*. Reproductive freedom news, v6, n18, p.7.

Fraenkel, Jack & Norman Wallen (2001). How to design and evaluate research in education. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Fouts, Gregory and Kimberley Burggraf (1999). Television situation comedies: female body images and verbal reinforcements. Sex roles: A journal of Research. V40 i5-6 p473(9)

Global information network (2001): *Rights-Kenya: War against gender violence far from over*. Interpress service.

Heise, Lori (1992). *Statistics on gender violence globally: Incidence of gender violence*. Center for women's global leadership.

Hooks, Bell (1989). Violence in intimate relationship: a feminist perspective. Talking back: thinking feminist thinking black. Boston: South End Press.

Human Rights Watch (1995): *Human rights watch global report on women's human rights*. Human rights watch global report on human rights.

Scheurer, Timothy (1990). Goddesses and Gold diggers: Images of women in popular music in the 1930s. V24 n1 p23 (16)

Women Rights Watch (1996). *Wife-beating in Kenya*. Women's watch, v10, n1 p.1.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN GIKUYU POPULAR MUSIC: A CATALYST FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	
Author(s): FAITH MAINA, Ph. D	
Corporate Source: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT OSWEGO.	Publication Date: CONFRENCE PRESENTATION, 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 1	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2A	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2B
Level 1 ☑	Level 2A ☐	Level 2B ☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please		
Signature: Faith Maina	Printed Name/Position/Title: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR	
Organization/Address: SUNY OSWEGO, OSWEGO, NY. 13126	Telephone: (315) 312 2641	FAX: (315) 312-5446
	E-Mail Address: MAINA @ OSWEGO.EDU	Date: 1/18/02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/CHESS
2805 E. Tenth Street, #120
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfacility.org

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)